

Sermon 114: The Terror and Comfort of the Second Coming: Luke 21:20-28

Luke 21:20-28 "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh..."

Summary: Despite the terror of the last days, Christ offers real hope with the promise of His coming.

Proposition: We must process everything through the promise of His immanent return.

Part 1: The prelude to Christ's return:

- **Four facts:**

- **Fact 1: There would be an historic siege on Jerusalem:**

- "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people..."

- **This event would be a judgment against the generation who willfully rejected Christ and viciously persecuted His church:**

- **Matthew 27:24-25** "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the

multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children..."

- **Acts 2:23** "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain..."
- **Acts 2:37** "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"
- **Acts 2:40** "With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation..."
- **There are many references to this judgment and deliverance in the NT:**
 - **James 5:7** "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord..."
 - **James 5:8** "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh..."
 - **James 5:9** "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door..."
- **Fact 2: The Jews would be scattered throughout the nations indefinitely but not permanently:** "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations..."
 - **This event would be decisive and painful: Luke 23:28** "Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children..."
 - **It would not be a permanent rejection: Isaiah 11:12** "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth..."
 - **God will remain faithful to His promises to Abraham: Romans 11:25-29** "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election,

they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all..."

- **Fact 3: Jerusalem would be dominated by the Gentiles during that period:** "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled..."
- **Fact 4: There will be visible, objective signs that immediately precede His Second Coming:** "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken..."
 - **There is a difference between the way the Day of the LORD will begin and the Second Coming.**
 - **The Day of the LORD will come as a "thief in the night"**
 - **Christ will return after a series of clearly defined events described in the book of Revelation:**
 - **Seven Seals:** Revelation 6-8
 - **Seven Trumpets:** Revelation 8-11
 - **Seven Bowls:** Revelation 15-19
- **Three observations:**
 - **Christ's teaching is general and silent on many details:**
 - **His purpose was not to articulate a detailed timeline or address curiosities:**
 - **He wanted them to understand the big picture and faithfully persevere:**
 - Suffering is real.
 - God preserves His people.
 - His grace will sustain them.
 - His deliverance is certain.

Part 2: A fuller understanding of Christ's teaching:

- **A mystery in scripture:**
 - **It is not necessary to have an absolute understanding of concepts to trust God and faithfully obey Him.**
 - **Overcomplicating basic truths can cripple introspective Christians.**

- **People who are young, have limited foundational information, or have a simplistic understanding of that information can live vibrant godly lives.**
- **We can see this in the story of scripture.**
 - Abraham had a simple promise from God.
 - Moses had a simple command to go to the Pharaoh.
 - Neither man had what we have, but they acted on what God gave them.
- **A mystery is a biblical concept that has always been true but not yet clearly communicated in scripture.**
- **The details Christ chose not to include are significant and helpful to us, but were unnecessary for them:**
- **A basic framework:**
 - **God has a specific timetable and purpose for that timetable: Daniel 9:24-27** "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate..."
 - **To address the greatest injustice in human history:** "To finish the transgression..."
 - **To reverse the terrible effects of sin upon His creation:** "To make an end of sins..."
 - **To reconcile mankind to their Creator:** "To make reconciliation for iniquity..."
 - **To establish everlasting glory and righteousness:** "To bring in everlasting righteousness..."
 - **To accomplish everything He has promised:** "To seal up the vision and prophecy..."

- **To establish Christ in His rightful place for eternity:**
 "To anoint the most Holy..."
- **First century Christians feared living through these events: 2 Thessalonians 2:1** "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"
- **God promises to preserve His people through trouble and from the trouble of those days: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9** "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief...For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Part 3: Our ultimate comfort: "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh..."

- **Despite the terror of the Last Day there is hope:**
 - He will come when history is the darkest it has ever been.
 - He will come with great power and glory.
 - He will come to set everything right forever.
 - He is coming and we must process everything through the promise of His immanent return.
- **Christ return will be history's greatest triumph:**
 - It will be a triumph for those who have died in Christ and are coming with Him.
 - It will be a triumph for those who have lived through the misery of this period and are being rescued in their darkest hour.
 - It will be the decisive triumph over the kingdom of darkness forever.
 - It will be a triumph for all eternity.

Final Thoughts:

- **Sin has turned this world upside down, and wreaked havoc since the Garden.**
- **God, in His infinite love and goodness, has not abandoned His creation.**
- **He knows what must happen to reverse this curse without compromising His character.**
- **He has determined to do it and through promise has put His word on the line.**
- **The cross and the resurrection have already established the basis for this redemption.**
- **His Second Coming will finish what He promised to do.**
- **He is our Redemption and is coming to make all things new.**
- **This same Savior who will come works actively, graciously, and personally in our lives today:**
 - He has promised to never leave us or forsake us.
 - He has promised to give us strength when we are weak.
 - He has promised to give us wisdom when we are confused.
 - He has promised to rise to our defense when we are unjustly attacked.
 - He has promised to rescue us when there is no other place to turn.
 - His work is not just future but also present.
- **We must process everything through the promise of His immanent return.**

Revelation 21:1-5 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful..."